

ENERGY & ENVIRONMENT

EPA Gives Updates On Superfund Cleanup Timeline

Agency staff say it could take two years to begin the actual cleanup work at the San Jacinto River Waste Pits.

TRAVIS BUBENIK | JANUARY 31, 2018, 2:03 PM



The San Jacinto River Waste Pits, an EPA Superfund site that is contaminated with dioxins, is located on Interstate 10 east of Houston.

The head of the Environmental Protection Agency recently added the contaminated San Jacinto River Waste Pits to a list of Superfund sites targeted for ["immediate and intense action."](#) Still, the actual cleanup of that site might not begin for another two years.

Tuesday night in Galveston, EPA staff gave updates on their [plan](#) to remove thousands of pounds of toxic dioxins from the [waste pits](#).

John Meyer, Remedial Branch Chief of the EPA's regional Superfund division, said the first step in the process is to get the companies carrying out the agreement to sign an agreement.

"We have to define all the details of that agreement, so that's what we're doing right now," he said. "We're telling them, 'these are the types of things that need to be done as part of this process.' We have some standard approaches about how to do it."

Meyer and Remedial Project Manager Gary Miller said it could take up to a year to get that agreement in place, and then it could take another year or so for engineers to come up with a design for the cleanup.

"We are going to put our biggest focus on how do we design this process to ensure we can do this work safely, not cause releases during the construction work, so we can get to a final completion,"

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Meyer said.

Among the details the agency is trying to hash out are whether the waste will be moved from the site by barge, truck or some other means. It's also still unclear where the waste will be sent for disposal, though Miller indicated he doesn't know of a local landfill that would be capable of accepting the waste.

The agency's plan calls for temporary dam structures that would hold back the San Jacinto River while the toxins are removed. But given the site's proximity to the coast, the threat of a hurricane will loom over the cleanup once it begins.

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